

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

05-414

Orleans

EAS.1302

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): North Eastham

Photograph



Address: 25 North Sunken Meadow Road

Historic Name: James Coleman-William Marsh House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: [1952-71], poss. older if moved

Source: Assessor records

Style/Form: Craftsman/ Bungalow

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☐ yes ☒ **Date:** Possibly [1952-1954]

Acreage: 0.43 acres

Setting: This property is situated at the intersection of North Sunken Road and Aspinet Road, both early rural roads that were once agricultural with a few farmsteads but are now subdivided with numerous houses from the mid-to late-20th century. This house is centered on its level parcel. There is a gravel parking area north of the house. The property is informally landscaped with expanses of lawn, scrub pines, and mature foundation plantings.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

EASTHAM

25 NORTH SUNKEN MEADOW ROAD

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The Coleman-Marsh House, built in ca. 1952-1971, could be described as a modest example of a Craftsman Bungalow. The features which are characteristic of the Bungalow form are the broad, gable-roofed dormers on the front and rear roof slopes of the main block. The primary Bungalow feature that is missing is the front roof slope extending forward to enclose a covered porch. In addition to the main block there is a one-story ell extending from the west side. The building rests on a concrete block foundation. The elevations are clad in weathered wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles and has projecting open eaves on the main block and dormers. There are no surviving chimneys. Fenestration now consists of modern, thermal 1/1 windows.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

As can be seen from the 1910 Barnstable County Atlas, North Sunken Meadow Road at that time was very sparsely settled (Figure 2). This house has an Assessor date of 1930, but the house is not shown on the 1938 or 1952 United States Geological Survey (USGS) aerial surveys of Cape Cod. Title research goes back to William B. Steele, Jr. (1899-1977). He was the son of William Steele, Sr. (1855-1951) who was a farmer and part-time barber. William Steele, Sr. was also active in real estate in Eastham, sometimes involving his son, William, Jr. who was listed as a shell fisherman in the 1930 census, and was divorced, living with his parents in the 1940 census. He married Anna Josephine Wells in 1942 (second marriage for both).

The deed or deeds wherein Anna and William B. Steele, Jr. bought this land have not been identified, but in January 1949, this parcel became Lot 1 in a 7-lot subdivision plan prepared for William Steele, Jr. (Plan 22035A, Figure 3). That plan shows this parcel as vacant. In 1950, the Steeles sold this parcel (Lot 1), with no reference to buildings, and Lot 2 with a building, to James D. Coleman and William S. Marsh, doing business as a partnership under the firm name Nauset Laboratories.¹ The next year, they conveyed both parcels to Nauset Laboratories, Inc.² In 1954, the Eastham-based Nauset Laboratories, Inc. sold Lots 1 and 2 to Charles H. Johnson of Boston.³ This deed references buildings but does not specify whether there were buildings on both parcels. As noted above, there is no building shown on Lot 1 on the 1952 USGS aerial survey (Photo 4), but perhaps the house

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 763/ Page 193.

² Book 787/ Page 99.

³ Book 865/ Page 550.

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was in place by 1954. If that is the case, and if the Assessor date of 1930 is accurate, that means this house would have been moved here from elsewhere sometime between 1952 and 1954.

In 1964, Charles Johnson was still living in Boston when he sold Lots 1 and 2 back to William S. Marsh and his wife Edith H., then living in Wanaque, NJ.⁴ In 1971, they were living in Provincetown when they sold just Lot 1 to Frances B. Tobey of Cambridge, MA.⁵ That same year, the USGS conducted another aerial survey and this house was in place (Photo 5). She was living in Orleans in 1985 when she sold this property to Gail Berkman and Mary Ellen Souser of Newton.⁶ They were living in North Truro in 1990 when they sold it to Yvonne Luther and Catherine E. Carter of Eastham.⁷ In 2001, it was sold to the current owner Selma K. Keene, then of NY, NY and now of Eastham.⁸

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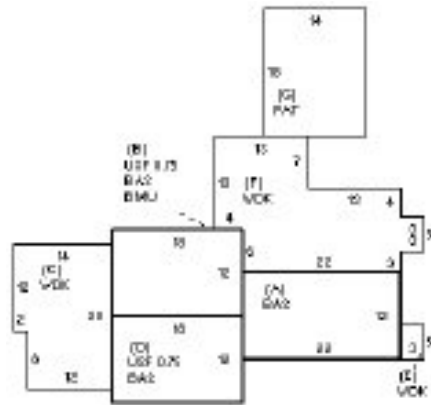


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from North Sunken Meadow Road, looking west.

⁴ Book 1261/ Page 81.

⁵ Book 1565/ Page 53.

⁶ Book 4637/ Page 124.

⁷ Book 7309/ Page 227.

⁸ Book 14366/ Page 187.

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Photo 3. View from Aspinet Road, looking north.



Figure 2. Detail of 1910 Barnstable County Atlas (arrow added).

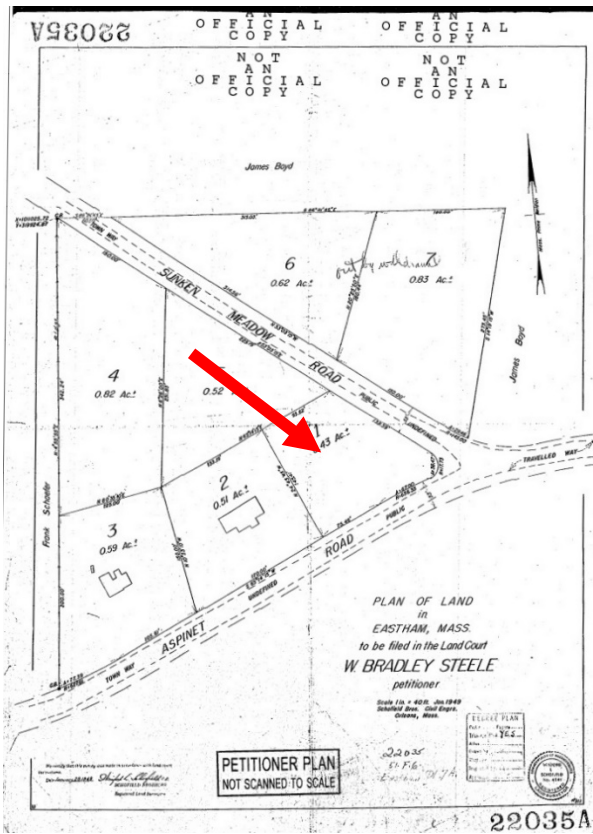


Figure 2. 1949 Plan of Land, Lot 1, Plan #22035A (arrow added).

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Photo 4. Detail from 1952 USGS aerial survey.



Photo 5. Detail from 1971 USGS aerial survey (arrow to house added).